

SERMON

OF

Simony & Sacrilege.

Thou art not to be forgotten, tho' it be forgotten, that who-
ever gave any Lands or Endowments to the Service of God,
gave it in a formal Writing as now adays betwixt Man and
Man, Sealed and Witnessed; and the render of the Gift was
before Altars by the Donor on his Knees, Deo & Ecclesie.

By Andrew's Notes upon the Liturgy.

EDWARD MARSTON, an unworthy Priest of
the Church of England, formerly of Whitby in Yorkeshire.

*Quoniam injustitie impunitas, iniquitas inolesteret, accin-
gam me viriliter, & stabo pro Castris Ecclesie, Clamare non
cessabo, quasi Tuba exaltabo vocem meam, annuntiabo populo
scelerum eorum, & raptoribus Ecclesiasticarum Possessionum pec-
cata eorum.*

Sanctus Theodardus Episcopus
Trajectensis & Martyr, &c.

LONDON: Printed for the Author. 1699.

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PROVERBS, XX. Verse xxv.

*It is a snare to the man who devoureth
that which is holy : and after vows to
make enquiry.*

MY Author telleth me in the Twentyfifth Chapter of this Book and the Eleventh Verse, That—*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver* : That is, as the outside is Beautiful, so the inside is far more precious, as Gold excelleth Silver. So are the words of Wisdom every where glorious, yet being fitted with Time and Season, they have an inward and secret Operation, far more forceable and effectual, than otherwise they would : *They be apples of gold with pictures of silver.* Now as these Silver Pictures, I mean, the Ornaments of Speech are not to be neglected, so the Golden Substance which by a secret Operation is directed to the Heart and Conscience, is every where to be preferr'd. Wherefore when I gave all diligence to speak unto you, not only things profitable for Christians, but seasonable for the Times we live in, I was directed to this Choice, concerning the Profanation of things Hallow'd, and the dangers thereupon ensuing. — Towards the unfolding whereof I am depriv'd of that usual help which other Scriptures do afford : Namely, that current of Speech and sequel of Argument, whereby one Sentence doth follow upon another in so good Consequence, that the Occasion and premises of the place, do serve for a Key to open our Text : But these Proverbs be certain Drops of Divine Wisdom (or Golden Apples you may call them)

them) each making an entire Globe or Ball within it self, whereof this is one. — We may divide it in the midst.

First, The one half compasseth him in the Snare of Destruction who spoileth God of his Right in Hallowed things.

The *Second* Catcheth him who seeketh occasion to unwind himself out of those Vows which are solemnly made before unto God; wherein the more he struggleth, the faster he tieth himself: For the first word is indifferently apply'd unto both parts, and so make a double snare. *Laquens est devorare sacrum: Laquens est post vota inquirere.*

This kind of sanctify'd things intended by Solomon is by consent of all Expositors taken to be an inferior Degree, whereunto we may descend by these few steps.

I. That Sacred Majesty of God, which is Holiness it self in the Abstract, is then prophan'd by Man (as much as in him lieth) and injur'd in the highest degree, when 'tis Blasphem'd. This is Destruction in it self with God, who raineth Snairs upon such for their Portion, and their Arrows shot against Heaven fall back upon their own pates.

And it were to be wished, that this was also a snare of Destruction amongst Men. For Nature hath so prescribed, and graven it in the Hearts of Men from the Beginning, that Blasphemy is punishable by Death. That Cursed Speech of Job's Wife; *Curse God and dye* (*Job 2. 9.*) was grounded upon a common receiv'd Maxim in that time of Nature, that a Blasphemer must not live. And that Heatherish King *Nebuchadnezzar*, had no sooner acknowledg'd the Love of God, but made a Decree, that, whosoever Blasphemed should die a violent Death.

But admit there be no such Law establish'd, and that
upon

upon this Charitable supposition, that a Christian Kingdom, will breed no such Monsters: Shall this be imputed for a Want? Not until those Monsters appear: For in the Commonwealth of *Israel* there was no positive Law against Blasphemy, until such time as a Blasphemer was discover'd (*Levit. 24. 14.*) and then upon that occasion the Law was made. So if this wicked Age wherein we live shall bring forth such Miscreants, and execrable Wretches as shall dare to breath direct Blasphemy against the God of Heaven to the utter dividing, and deing of him, then I take it to be a thing not unworthy the highest Consultation, whether that Judicial Law of God be a Pattern for us in this Kind. For if we add to the Law of God concerning Theft, for the better preservation of the Publick Peace; let us not diminish the Law of the same God for the preservation of that Sacred Name, whereupon the Publick Good both of Church and State doth immediately depend. If the Civil Magistrate doth carry a Sword, and not in vain, not a Rod for Correction only, but a Sword to punish with Death; then let not that Sin, which by the general consent of all Divines is of all Sins absolutely the greatest, escape the edge of the Sword. Thus much is infer'd upon necessary implication, That 'tis destruction in the highest degree to Prophane Holiness it self. Yet this is not intended by the direct meaning of this Text.

2. As God is Holiness in himself, so hath it pleas'd him to Communicate the same to his Church, to make her not only a Catholick, but an Holy Church. To this end hath he Sanctify'd special Means, that is, separated them, or set them apart from common use to effect Holiness in the Hearts of the People, whereof there be Three Degrees.

First, The Word and Prayer, together with the Administration of the Sacraments have the first place; wherefore

fore the Arch-Ministers of the Gospel, the Twelve Apostles, leaving all other Business gave themselves to Prayer, and the Administration of the Word (*Act. 6.4.*) To devour these is apparent Destruction: For where these be wanting the People must needs perish (*Prov. 29.8.*) Yet such is the Malice, and subtilty of the Serpent, that rather than this shall stand entire, he will so work that one shall devour another. The time was when Prayer being turn'd into a Mass, and the Mass into an Idol, did swallow up the Preaching of the Word: The time is that Preaching hath well-nigh swallow'd up Prayer, as if there was nothing Holy in the Church but a Sermon. Such is the Peevishness of our Corrupt Nature, that where God hath combined such a lovely pair of Vertues together, we cannot lean to the one; but we must despise the other. Whereas indeed there is such a sweet Concord and Harmony between them, that who so despiseth the one, shall be depriv'd of the Comfort of the other. They be the Ascending and Descending Angels of Commerce between God and us. The Word teacheth us to know his Truth. Prayer testifieth that we acknowledge his Goodness to be the only Fountain of all Blessings. Preaching bringeth Knowledge, without which Devotion is Blind; Prayer exerciseth Devotion, without which Knowledge is Lame and Unprofitable: The own soweth the Seed, the other fetcheth a shower of Graces from Heaven to make it grow: By Preaching God doth serve us with that Heavenly Manna, the Food of our Souls; by Prayer we do serve God, which is the End of all our Preaching. Be it far from us then to make a Divorce between these two, which can so well agree.

Secondly, That these Sacred means might take effect in working Holiness in the Church of God he hath Sanctify'd and set apart in the second Rank, Time, Place, and Person for the Ministry of the Word, Prayer, and Sacra-

Sacraments. For Time he hath selected the Lord's Day, for Place the Temple, for Persons the Clergy.

1. The Lord's Day Sanctify'd, or set apart from common use to God's Service, is then devour'd, when it is Prophan'd by weekly Business, or lewd Sports. The Ends why the Lord's Day was Ordain'd are these. 1. For the Exercise of all Duties of Piety, in Publick especially. 2. For the Practice of all Duties of Charity and Piety. 3. To remember the great Works of God, especially of the Creation and Redemption of the World. And if in every Week, or Month, or Year, we should set some time apart to Commemorate God's Mercy in all his other Acts of Gracious Providence belonging to our Preservation, it would be no Superstition, but an Act of Piety in any single Christian, or (if Authority should think good) in any Publick Society of them. So likewise the Birth, Passion, Ascension of Christ, the Descent of the Spirit, the Birth or Martyrdom of the Apostles, and Saints of Scripture, and any remarkable temporal Deliverance, or (by proportion) also any matter of Humiliation, any Sin or Judgment on a Kingdom, will by the example of God himself, (both in this Fourth Commandment, and in other Feasts and Fasts of the Church prescribed by him) be resolv'd to be fit Seasons and Opportunities to Consecrate some considerable part of our time to God.

2. The Holiness of the Place is devoured, when the Temple of God is made an Exchange (*John 2. 16.*) I mean not only the Temple at *Hierusalem*, but every place Consecrated to God's Worship is Holy, and therefore (saith the Apostle) not to be Prophan'd by common Employments (*1 Cor. 11. 22.*) *Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God?*

3. Sanctify'd Persons set apart for the Ministry of the Gospel are devour'd a thousand ways: yea rather than
fail

fail, we our selves will devour our selves. That unhappy Faction amongst us about Mint and Annice had brought such a Snare upon this Church, as, if God's especial Providence had not preserved us, the Papist on the one side, and the prophane Atheist on the other had devour'd both sides with open Mouth.

Verily 'tis a Snare to devour any thing that is Sanctified: But yet I am not come to the chief part of my Text.

As the Sacred Ordinance of God, the Word and Sacraments cannot be Ministred without convenient Time, Place, and Person set apart for that purpose: So neither can Place nor Person be fit for that Ministry without convenient Maintenance.

Wherefore God of his Goodness out of those Temporal Blessings in abundance bestowed upon the Sons of Men, hath resum'd a Portion for this purpose: Which Portion is said in my Text to be Sanctified, because 'tis set apart from common use to the Maintenance of God's Service. For 'tis laid down for a Principle in (*Levit. 27. 28.*) *Every thing separate from common use is holy to the Lord:* So that where the Scripture speaketh of this Portion there to be separate, and to be Holy, be *Synonyma*, diverse Terms expressing one, and the self-same thing.

These ly open to be devour'd by Covetous and Needy Persons; these be alluring Baits to entice a Man to devour them; but *Solomon* giveth us a Caveat, that under this Bait there lieth an Hook to ensnare the Conscience of the Devourer; so as he may swallow the Bait, and wound himself: *Win the World, and lose his Soul.*

Be it far from me to ensnare the Judgment of the Weak, or any ways to darken the Truth by Ceremonial or Levitical Shadows. I know where I speak, in the Presence

fence of God, and of those, who are able to discern, and judge what I say. Give me leave to enlighten my self in the unfolding of this Text so far only as the Moral Law of God, which is perpetual, and the Evidence of his Gospel do second the same.

That Precept of Wisdom to her Son in this Book (Chap. 3. ver. 9.) Honour God with thy substance; albeit she had written it in the Hearts of Men by Nature: Yet she had need to renew it, since many endeavour to blot it out; For 'tis a conceit commonly conceiv'd, that for those Temporal Blessings we possess, if we use them soberly without excess, justly without oppression of others, and charitably with some portion relieve the Poor, we are thereby discharged, as if no part thereof was due to God, or did any wise appertain to the first Table.

The *Nicodemites* were content to become Christians thus far, that they would give their Hearts unto Christ, so they might dispose of their Bodies as occasion serv'd. These go a degree farther: They will Worship God in Soul and Body both, That of the abundance of the heart the Mouth may speak, the Knee bow, the Hands and Eyes be lifted up: But for Honouring God in their Riches, they think 'tis more than needs: They will offer to God the Oblations of their Hearts, and Calves of their Lips too; but not of their Stalls. *We will go with the Wise Men* (saith St. Bernard) *to seek Christ from the East: yea we will fall down and worship him:* but we be grown too wise to open our Treasuries, that is, the renting of our Hearts, we cannot endure to be ty'd unto it. If St. Paul therefore will make Agrippa a Christian, he must except these Bands too: But God will not release

For as God is the owner and giver of all, so he will be acknowledged by a Sacred Rent to be Lord of all. He gave Blessings to *Abraham*, *Abraham* repay'd part in
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acknow-

acknowledgment of that gift. (*Gen. 14. 20.*) The Land of *Canaan* was given unto his Posterity, but that Sacred Tribute was reserv'd as Holy to the Lord. For want of the payment whereof, God doth often distrain, and re-enter upon his own; restraining the influence of the Heaven and the sap of the Earth, as (*Mal. 3. 10.*) *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, &c.* Therefore the Windows of Heaven were shut before, because this Duty was kept back. *Si Domino Decimam non dederis, tu ad Decimam revoceris*, saith *St. Augustine*. When the Tenth is deny'd to God, he resumeth Nine parts and leaveth us the Tenth, as in many Famines he hath done. For the quantity what portion is due; I aver not precisely, because I have not prov'd it: Only thus much ariseth without question. That as God is the giver of all our Wealth, and he only who blesteth the works of our Hands; so in acknowledgment of his Universal Dominion, he will have a part thereof set apart for his Honour and Worship.

Serm. de
Temp. 219.

Secondly, I hope you will not determine any contemptible Portion for God: as if it was decent for us to dwell in Houses of Cedar, and the Ark of God to be wrapped in Goats hair, (*2 Sam. 7. 2.*) or to honour God as we honour the Poor, with some cold Benevolence. If any be of that Religion, he's not far from *Jeroboam's*, for he made the base of the People, the Clergy; these make the Clergy the basest and meanest of the People. Is this to give to God that which is God's, or to Honour him with our Riches? But what tell we you of God? You profess to honour him with all your Hearts, But doth he eat Bull's Flesh, or drink the Blood of Goats? Doth he dwell in Temples made with Hands, or feed of the Fruit

Fruit of the Land? Not so, yet he hath a Right and Interest in all, and hath taken into his own possession a part to dispose of at his pleasure, (*Levit. 27. 30.*) And when he hath set his Mark upon it. *All this is mine.* He after disposeth of it, (*Numb. 18. 31.*) *Behold I have given it to the Children of Levi:* For what? For their service in the Tabernacle of the Congregation. To what end? To encourage them in the law of the Lord. (*2 Chron. 31. 4.*) What is all this to you? The Levites are gone, and their Law is vanish'd, 'tis true: Yet this Ordinance is in force still ratify'd in the Church of Christ by St. Paul (*1 Cor. 9. 14.*) *God hath so ordained, that they which Preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*

That is to say, as that Right, which God then had in his Portion, he conferr'd upon the Priests and Levites for their Service at the Altar. So od hath ordain'd, that, that Right which He now hath in your Wealth, that reasonable Portion now set apart for his Worship, be it what it will be, is conferr'd upon the Clergy for their Service in the Gospel: *Sic Ordinavit Deus*, and that upon the same Moral Considerations as before.

First, God is the owner, and giver of all we Possess still, therefore unless with some Portion we acknowledge his supream Dominion, we shall not only transgress Nature's Law, but in time forget whose Tenants we are.

Secondly, This God hath a Clergy still, who be *appointed* set apart for a more Excellent Worship than that of the Levites, (*Rom. 1. 1.*)

Thirdly. He keeps the same love and affection towards his Clergy still, (*Mat. 10. 40.*) *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and him that sent me.*

Fourthly, There's a Service to be done in the Tabernacle of the Congregation still, and a more painful Service

vice than that of the *Levites* : They serv'd by turns; we continually labour in that which spendeth a more precious Humour than the sweat of our Brows.

Fifthly, We have need to be encouraged in the Law of the Lord still, and as great need as ever the *Levites* had, (2 *Chron*, 31. 4.) Therefore that Ordinance of God doth stand still upon the same grounds : That we must live in it (as the Apostle speaketh) of that Portion which is sanctify'd by the Temple, or as he speaks more emphatically of our Times in it of that which is hallowed, or sanctify'd by the Gospel itself.

Decima fructuum vegetabilium, qui eas recipit in loco Dei est subrogatus. Ergo quod Melchisedec Abraham obtulit Decimas, eo confectus est honoris gradus super se exaltare. Calvin. in Heb. 1. 4.

By this you see, First, that the Right, Property, and Interest in Church-Livings, is originally in God, not in us : Which therefore is said, to be sanctify'd, in my Text. Therefore if any shall devour it by Alienation, or Sacrilege, they stand answerable to God himself, and not to us, in that Day when all Courts shall be Judg'd over again.

Secondly, You see, That this Right and Interest in Church-Livings which we have, we have by grant from God, we receive it immediately from Him; so is it the free Gift of God, notas He is the Author of Nature only, for so are all other Gifts; but as He's the Author of Grace. For to this End hath He given it, that by our Ministry, Grace might be wrought in the Hearts of the People. * *Deus qui dignatus est totum dare, decimam a nobis dignatur repetere, non sibi, sed nobis sine dubio profuturam.* First, God doth vouchsafe to give us all things in abundance, Secondly, He accepteth one Portion back again in acknowledgment that we hold the rest of Him. Thirdly, That Portion He hath bestow'd again in behoofe of our Souls.

* Traicté de Best. Cathol. Conversionis.

So then with a part of your Temporal Goods you honour God; that part He Sanctifieth, and returneth into your Bosoms for your Spiritual and Everlasting good.

What

What injury is it then to God that his sacred Portion by Alienation and Profanation should be devour'd? What indignity is it to the Goodness of God, that this Right we have in things Sanctify'd, deriv'd from God for his Service, should be bought and sold? That that Right which is the Gift of God, the free and gracious Gift of God, given for the perpetual maintenance of the Gospel, should be obtain'd with Money? I doubt it doth taste of *the gall of bitterness* (*Acts* 8. 23.) And sometimes incurreth that Snare of Destruction there threatned, *Pereat pecunia tua tecum*. For even that Money doth seldom prosper.

Doubtless to spoil God of his Right, is to swallow our own Bane: Yet because Lucre doth blind our Eyes, the danger of this Destruction is not conspicuous. Wherefore *Solomon*, doth here call it a Snare, *Laqueus est devorare sacrum*. I would gladly know some real and material difference betwixt *Simon Magus's* Bargain, and some of ours; saving only, that he dealt plainly, and we devise shifts to ensnare our selves (*Acts* 8. 19.) *Simon offered money*, and said, *Give me power, that on whomsoever I lay my Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost*. We offer Money, and say, Give me, or get me Power, that on whom I lay my Hands, he may be Sanctify'd, and set apart for the Word and Sacraments. What difference betwixt these two Powers? Saving, that that was Extraordinary, and Temporary for that time; this is Perpetual, and Essential to the Church of Christ, and so consequently of more worth.

It will be said, *St. Bernard* spake like a Fool in objecting this to the Clergy: "There was never Money given, nor offer'd for that Sacred Power; but for some Honour, or Commodity thereunto annex'd. 'Tis true. And shall we think, that *Simon Magus* did offer his Money for the Holiness of that Power, which he then desir'd, or

*Declam. super
Reliquimus
omnia.*

"was

“was it rather for that Honour, and Commodity, which he suppos’d were annexed? It was that Honour he ambitiously affected, that he might be accounted ^{the prince} v. 9. Assuring himself withal, that tho’ he had offer’d very largely, yet if he could bestow such visible Gifts of the Spirit at his pleasure, he would make himself whole again in a short time.

Yet I make no doubt, but the Sin of *Simon* was *Simony*. And who list to open his Eyes and look about him, he shall find that *Simony* is not a School Term, or a Word of Art; but a Snare to intrap the Consciences of corrupt Men.

Ask a Patron who useth to Merchandize his Benefices; and he will protest unto you, that for that Right of Church-Livings deriv’d upon the Clergy together with their Function, he knoweth not what it meaneth, neither doth he intend any indignity to God, or Holy Things, he deals only for that which is valuable and Money worth. And I do verily believe him, for here’s the Snare.

Neither do I think, that *Ananias* or *Saphira* his Wife did intend any injury to the Holy Ghost in retaining part of what themselves had given: Only they thought that a piece of Money was as well saved as not.

I verily perswade my self, that *Gebazi* meant no disgrace to that sacred Power of Cleansing the Leprosie: But only perceiving the liberal disposition of *Naaman*, he knew, that two Suits of Apparel, and a Talent or two of Silver might be taken with as great thanks as left. The Scripture putteth us out of doubt (*Mal. 3. 8.*) That when the Jews kept back their *Tithes and Offerings*, it was the farthest end of their Thought, to spoil God. Wherefore when God expostulateth with them; *you have spoil’d me*, they Wonder’d and said, *Wherein have we spoil’d Thee?* In *Tithes and Offerings*, saith God.

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We know, we had beguil'd certain fat Priests and *Levites*, who have enough besides: But we never dreamt of spoiling thee. Well (saith God) *you have spoil'd me.* *Sacrilege and Simony* are spiritual Sins, and sensual Men will not conceive them. So much of the first Snare.

Secondly, They who perswade themselves, they can very cunningly and smoothly wind themselves out of the former Snare, are taken in this second. For having got an hint from some, that Tithes are not due by Divine Right, they resolve their Consciences on this manner. Albeit by the Law of *Moses*, God did bind the People of the *Jews* to the precise payment of Tithes, (which was also Zealously urged by the Prophets) yet in the time of the ospel, 'tis a thing more arbitrary and indifferent. So long as they live of the Gospel, and are partakers of the Altar, 'tis sufficient. Well: ive they shall; a certain Pittance they shall have, wherewithal they must be content, and there's an end. For when *Moses*, *Elias*, and *Christ* met upon Mount *Tabor*, the first two Vanish'd. *Moses's* Law was very Chargeable, whereby that Tribe of *Levi* was grown too Rich: *Elias* also was an hot urger of *Moses's* Law, but there came a Cloud, which carried away *Moses* and *Elias*, both together, with their Ceremonials and Judicials, and *Christ* was left alone, who was content to be Poor enough, and so we mind to keep him. Admit all this were true, yet the second part of my Text makes a sufficient answer to these Replyers: *Post vota inquirere.*

Our Progenitor and Fore-Father being taught by Nature to Honour God with their substance, directed by God's Law, what proportion was fittest for that purpose, animated by the Examples of the Primitive Church in their voluntary Oblations, did consecrate a certain Portion of their Temporals, by solemn Vow unto God, delivering up to him their Title and Right from themselves

selves and their Heirs for ever. Annexing commonly some words of fearful Execration, that if any attempt to Alienate, or take them away that his Account should be without favour in the last Day. If after these solemn Vowes any shall Enquire, that is, shall devise colours and shifts to Alien, or take away Things Vowett unto God; to wash, or clip that sacred Tribute which hath God's Mark upon it; he falleth inevitably into Solomon's second Snare of Destruction. *Laqueus est post vota inquirere.* For as *Levi* paid Tithes in the Loyns of *Abraham*; so did we vow Tithes and Church-Endowments, in the Loyns of our Fore-fathers. They for us, and we in them have Invested God in that Portion, whereby we stand eternally Bound never to claim Interest therein again.

Albeit we had liberty before to use Ecclesiastical-Livings as meer Temporals; yet after these Vows our Case is the very same with that of *Ananias* (*Act. 5. 2.*) who for keeping back that which himself had Consecrated to the Church, and colouring the same with a Lye, was taken in this Snare of Destruction, fell down at the Apostles Feet, gave up the Ghost. The same Snare falling upon his Wife, for partaking with him in that Councel, that is, for enquiring after the Vows were past. If you enquire a farther ground of this assertion, let it be the Rule of common Equity; that no Man having passed his Consent and Deed may change it to the prejudice of another. That which is given to the Church, is passed over unto God; therefore he that shall take it again without the consent of God, whose it is, committeth direct Sacrilege against him, and dealeth worse with God, than God will suffer any Man to deal with us: Shall not this bring a Snare upon him? *He that will be rich* (saith the Apostle *1 Tim. 6. 9.*) not he that would be Rich with honest endeavours; but he that resolveth he will be Rich

Offerimus
Deo, quod
Ecclesie tra-
dimus.

Rich by Hook, or Crook, tho' he spoil God himself, shall fall into Temptations, and Snares, and noisome Lusts which drown Men in perdition, and destruction. *Nemesis Dei aliquando justa est, qui invasionem jurium & privilegiorum Ecclesiasticorum Bello, Fame, & multis aliis Calamitatibus sæpenumero punit.*

Secondly, Admit after the Vows it be none of ours, by Right which is given to God; yet let us enquire if we can compass the consent of the Ministers themselves to get, or partaway somewhat. *Volenti non fit injuria.* Alas! our consent for the Alienation of Ecclesiastical Things from that Religious End, to which they were given, is nothing, because the Right Originally is in God, and not in us. For the Act of *Ananias* in parting his own Donation, was not done unto Men, but unto God (*Acts* 5. 4.) because after the Donation, the Right was not in Men, but in God; and therefore cannot be taken away without his consent. Let me parallel this with the like. Tell me, what's the reason that after the Knot of Matrimony is duely ty'd, by consent of their Parents and Friends, ratify'd by the Minister, what's the reason (I say) that afterwards the consent of both the Parties, of all their Friends, seconded by the Minister himself, is not able to untie the same Knot? Your Answer will be, Because Marriage is not of the Nature of a Civil Contract, where God himself hath an hand. *Therefore whom God hath joined, let no Man separate,* without God's consent. Neither be Church-Endowments Civil, where God is a Party. Therefore that which God hath receiv'd, let no Man take away without his consent.

Thirdly, If this will not serve their turns after the Vows, Men will enquire yet farther, Whether God did ever receive them, or no? For the Silver-shrines of *Diana*, were never given, because never accepted by God. 'Tis true: But extend not this limitation too far, for

Mentitur Ananias Deus quia Ecclesie fucum fecerat Apostoli homines sunt non privati, quum Deus illis vices suas mandaverat.
Calvin in *Acts* 5. 4.

that is dangerous. First then, let us not sit Judges upon the Consciences of our Fore-fathers ; 'tis a Snare after their Vows to enquire.

Secondly, Admit their purposes were stain'd with imperfection ; shall that make their Deed void ? God forbid. What Act of Man is without imperfection ? That devout Zeal of *Jehu* was accepted, notwithstanding his Golden-Calves in *Bethel*. Look to the other parallel. How many Exceptions might be taken unto Marriages in these Days ? If we should enquire after the Intents and finister Affections of the Parties Marry'd, with other by-respects, which make them not so acceptable unto God, as otherwise without doubt they would be : Yet doth the Bond stand firm before God and Man : For there's more Vertue in the good of an Act to confirm, than imperfection can dissolve : Else *Jacob* had mis'd of his Blessing, *Gen. 27*.

Thirdly, If this will not do, Men will enquire yet farther after the Vows, If God will not in some Cases, give his consent to part with his Right ? No doubt, He that is so ready to convert his own Portion to benefit the Church in saving Souls, will be as willing for our good to forego, as he ever was to receive.

But these Cases be rare, wherein 'tis not dark what God doth warrant. As in that other parallel of Matrimony, there's a Case wherein God granteth a dismissal (*Mat. 19. 9.*) So there's a necessity wherein *David* may eat of the Shew-bread, which, otherwise, is not lawful but for the Priests (*Mat. 12. 4.*) But to make God speak, where He's silent, and to extort his consent, where He's most unwilling : This is a Snare.

Fourthly, If every way our Consciences be insnar'd, the next Inquiry must be, How we shall be deliver'd ? Admit we have robb'd, or beguil'd the Church, 'tis past, we are sorry for it. Will not God of his mercy break the Snare,

Snare, that our Souls may escape in the Day of the Lord? No doubt, He that was ready to break the Snare of Death, will be ready to break this Snare also. But upon what Condition? The Prophet *Ezekel* makes a direct Answer in the 33 Chapter of his Prophecy, and 15th Verse, *If he return from his sin, and do that which is right, to wit, If he restore the pledge, and give again that which he hath robbed, and commit no iniquity; he shall surely live, and not die.* If he restore.

But may not these Ifs be dispens'd withall? No surely. That of St. *Augustine* is firmly grounded upon the Book of God. *Non remittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum.* For as in *Moses's* Law (*Numb. 4. 7.*) they were bound to restore the damage with the Principal, besides the Ram for the Atonement, which was the shadow; so in the truth of the Gospel, besides the Atonement made by Christ upon the Cross, Restitution must be made by us. Christ has satisfied the Justice of God for us, which was not in our power to do; but we must satisfy the Church, and our own Consciences, besides the Atonement. We will amend and be sorry for that which is past: Will not that satisfy? True. But can we amend so long as we abide in the Sin? As the taking of it from the Church doth begin, so the keeping of it doth continue the Fault. So long as the Spoil is in thine House, the Sin remaineth when the Act is past (*Isaiah 3. 14.*) And where the Sin remaineth, there's no amendment.

For the Act we are sorry. *Be not deceived: God is not mocked.* Thou canst not be sorry for taking of that which thou keepest voluntarily. *Sine restitutione penitentia non agitur, sed fingitur,* saith St. *Augustine*. Without Restitution, no Repentance: Without Repentance, no Salvation. Unless we cast that down at the Apostles Feet which was got by Sacriledge, we are further from Repentance than *Judas*, who notwithstanding pass'd out of this

Epist. 54. ad
macedoniam]

this Life in a double Snare of Soul and Body. Unjust dealing is dangerous against whomsoever : But beware of Sacrilege. *'Tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Heb. 10. 31) *Thy Money may perish with thee*, but to save thy self, together with thy Money 'tis impossible. A Rich Man cannot pass the Needle's Eye without a strain ; nor a Sacrilegious Person without detriment. 'Tis Snare every way to devour that which is Sanctified, and after the Vows to enquire how to take that from God, which is once given. 'Tis a Snare to enquire over-strictly after the Vows, what God did take, and what was given to Superstitious use. 'Tis a Snare to enquire colours, and probabilities for God's consent, where He's most silent. 'Tis a Snare after the Sin, to enquire how by some slight Repentance, we might have our Souls and our Money too.

'Tis strange to see what a world of Enquiries the Subtily of the Serpent hath suggested to entangle poor Souls. We make Queries, and put Cases, and beat our Brains, and all to insnare a troubled Conscience against the Day of the Lord. I assure you, that I have Treated of a Doctrine in this Sermon, which is neither New, nor to my knowledge Controversial. I have purposely contain'd my self within the compass of common, and receiv'd Grounds, laying them open according to my poor Skill. Wherefore in the Name of God, and his Church, let me commend unto you the Exhortation of God himself, (*Malcha the 3d. Chapter and 10th. Verse*) *Bring ye all the Tithes into the Store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a Blessing without measure.* Bring all the Tithes, that were a bootless Exhortation : Bring some reasonable portion, and it shall be easier for you in the Day of Judgment. And seeing God would have us to prove him, let us try him whether he will be as good as his Word.

Prove

Prove him if he will not open the windows of Heaven and pour us out a Blessing without measure. Prove him, if he will not prosper the Nine Parts, Ten times more than before. Prove him, if He will not send a Learn'd and Pious Ministry into this Land, such as shall be able to stand in the Gap against an Adversary, when Learned Pious and Othodox Divines, shall receive Encouragement from the Altar. Prove him, if we be honouring him in Soul, and Body, and Goods, He will not honour us with a Flourishing Gospel to feed our Souls, with Health and Peace : To preserve our Bodies with Health and Prosperity to our Lives end, so far as shall advantage our Souls and Bodies to Eternal Life.

Which God grant unto us for his Son's sake Jesus Christ the Righteous ; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and one Eternal Everliving, and only wise God, be Glory, Praise and Power, and Thanksgiving, now, and for ever. Amen.

*POSTSCRIPT, from that Excellent Book
called The Snake in the Grass.*

OUR Priests (says *Thorpe* the Quaker) came not of the Lineage of *Levi*, but of the Lineage of *Judah* to which *Judah*, no Tithes were promis'd to be given. Thus *Thorpe*, as the Quakers have Quoted him. But now, who told *Thorpe*, or the Quakers, that our Priests came of the Lineage of *Judah* ? Are they *Jews* ? What fulsome stuff is this ! But our Saviour was of *Judah*. What then ! He was not a Priest after the Order of *Judah*, of which Tribe *Moses* spake nothing concerning Priesthood, (*Heb*, 7. 14.) But He was a Priest after the
Order

Order of *Melchisedec* (*Heb.* 5. 6.) And Tithes were paid to *Melchisedec*, long before *Levi*, who paid Tithes to *Melchisedec*, being yet in the Loins of his Father *Abraham* (*Heb.* 7. 10.)

Now the Evangelical Priesthood is after the Order of *Melchisedec*: And therefore they claim Tithes, as being due to that Order of Priesthood: So that all their Arguments as to the Law, and Levitical Priesthood being superseded, operate nothing against Priests of a Superior and more excellent Priesthood. And there being as Ancient mention of Tithes as there is of Priesthood in the World, I have no manner of doubt, but they are as Ancient as Priesthood it self, that is, as *Adam*: From whom descended the Knowledge of Tithes, as of Sacrifices, and of Priesthood which are all the Relatives, the one being the Maintenance, the other the Office of the Priesthood; and therefore the one, must be as ancient as the other: And they were all alike receiv'd by the Heathen World, by an immemorial Tradition from the Beginning, without knowing of their beginning, as they knew not their own Origination, nor of the World, of Marriage, and other positive Institutions, which by an Universal Tradition had been convey'd down to them.

God reserved the Tenth part of our Substance, as the Seventh of our Time, to be paid, as a Tribute and acknowledgement to him, from whom we receive all: And therefore the Payment of Tithes is a part of God's Worship. The Priests being made the Receivers (because we cannot pay them to God immediately) is but a secondary Consideration. They were part of the Offerings to God, under the Law (*Numbers* 18. 24.) They are called his Inheritance (*Deut.* 18. 1.) not as then Instituted, but then given to the *Levites*. Nor is *Melchisedec's* Tithing of *Abraham*, mention'd as the beginning or first rise of Tithes; but 'tis told occasionally, and as a thing

thing well known and receiv'd, even in those early Days. And being part of the Worship of God, *Holy unto the Lord* (Levit. 27. 32, 33. they were not Alienable, or to be chang'd with any thing else.

The Priests could no more excuse Men from the Payment of their Tithes (for they were paid to God) than they could commute any of the other Offerings, or Sacrifices, upon the pretence that they were given to the Priests for their maintenance.

No Man says, That the People did offer Sacrifices to the Priest; tho' the Priests did live of their Sacrifices; neither are Tithes offer'd to Priests, but to God, tho' they are paid to the Priests, and receiv'd by the Priests from the Hands of the People, as other Offerings to the Lord were.

Therefore the Substraction of the Tithes, as of other Offerings, is call'd a Robbing, not of the Priests, but of God (*Mal. 3. 8.*) 'Tis invading what God hath reserv'd peculiar to himself, that we may not touch it; of all the other Trees of the Garden, we may freely Eat. And this is the same Sacriledge as to tast of the forbidden Fruit. That was the first Sin. It was Sacriledge. And I am not afraid to say, that all are guilty of it, who have seiz'd upon the Tithes of God, and pay them not to his Priests: And that this Sin will not be forgiven, without a severe Repentance and Restitution.

How far extream Ignorance, occasion'd by the Torrent of the Times, will Excuse; I will not now dispute: But I'me sure wilful affected Ignorance, occasion'd by Negligence, or Covetousness will not.

And let this be added, to all that I have said, That several Kings of *England*, who had then the sole Right and Property in all the Lands of *England*, have anew Dedicated, by particular Vows, as *Jacob* (*Gen. 28. 22.*) all the whole Tithes of all the Lands of *England* to God; and
sign'd

Sign'd, Seal'd, and Granted, by the said King, his
Heirs, and Successors, that they, their Heirs, and
their assigns, should not, nor lawfully might, nor
ought, to take, receive, or demand, any such
Tithes, upon their Knees, at the Altar, or in the
Church, or in any other place, or in any other
manner, and with the approbation of the Lords
Bishops, and Clergy, of the Land, with heavy Curles and Impo-
sitions, upon themselves; or any of their Successors, who
should, or lawfully might, or ought, to take, receive, or
demand, the same, or Inbroach in any part, upon the
Tithes of God; and upon all who should receive, or
demand, Grants from them, or assist them in such
Matters, the same has been Confirmed by several Acts of Par-
liament.

Now if a Man cannot violate his own Vow, how
can he annul that of another? Especially where his Vow
was only for the Payment of what God had before Re-
serv'd to himself. I will not launch out any farther
upon this Subject, only tell the Quakers; That it was the
Pious and sober men who first set up the Notion of Tithes
being *Abolish'd*, against their own Canonists, only
to leave the People a Liberty, to bestow their
Tithes upon the Regulars, and to maintain the Sacri-
legious innovations, which the Pope had introduc'd
upon the Tithes of the secular Clergy, to enable them
to maintain King *Henry* the 8th. instead of *Rome*, and
yet the more Sacrilegiously appropriate to the Land.

FINIS.

